

Qualitative report: A Summary of the Guidance

It is expected that you are using the Psychology and Counselling House Rules Document for guidance on every section that is required to be included, as well as the content required within each section of a psychology research report. Furthermore, two examples of qualitative research papers have been provided on Moodle for you to see what the method and results sections look like.

The information below is additional and relates specifically to the assessment question for the 2023/2024 academic year.

Abstract

This should be approximately 150 words and summarise each of the four main sections of the report; Introduction, Method, Results, and Discussion.

Introduction

The focus of the report is on motivation in university students, so the literature you source and include **must** be related to motivation. There are a number of relevant journal articles that have been added to Moodle to get you started with your literature search, but it is expected that you engage in significant wider reading at this level to construct a solid introduction to the topic area. The literature that you choose to include overall should introduce what motivation is, briefly define the different types of motivation, and allude to an appropriate theory that underpins your research question(s). From here, you want to be including specific findings that demonstrate what factors influence motivation in university students to lead into your research question(s).

The introduction for a qualitative report should end with a clear research question – what, exactly, are you exploring with this study? I have added below a research question for this study. Notice that this isn't too broad, nor too narrow, and I should be able to answer this question with a thorough qualitative analysis of collected data.

- What factors have an influence on university students' motivation to apply for, and maintain engagement with, a university degree programme?

Method

(do not forget that this section must be written in the past tense.)

Participants

How many participants in total? Explain the demographics of the participants. (How many were male and how many female? What were their ages?). You should also report here how participants were recruited, which has been summarised below.

Participants were selected to take part in the study based upon the provision of interest noted by a group of university applicants during their stage of application over the previous two years. Email communication was sent including a brief outline of the purpose of the study and the focus group was arranged. Of those who had responded and were interested in taking part in this study, the four participants outlined above were those that were able to attend on the date and time, and at the location of the focus group.

Data Collection

This section should outline the process that has been followed to gather/collect data. Who collected the data? How was data collected and in what form (focus group? One to one interviews? Audio recorded?). How long did data collection periods last? How was data recorded and stored? Information on the development of questions/the interview schedule? Again, I have summarised this information for you as you were not the 'researchers' responsible for collecting this data:

A semi-structured interview schedule was created by the researcher that aimed to explore motivation in university students. Ten open-ended questions were developed with some additional prompts included to elicit specific examples from participants. The interview schedule was used to conduct one 60-minute focus group with the four participants which was audio recorded. Following completion of the focus group, the researcher transcribed the information provided by participants verbatim to use for data analysis. Participants names were replaced with pseudonyms to maintain anonymity in the final report, and any identifying information within the final transcript was removed or replace with another pseudonym to further ensure no participants could be identified from any quotes used. The final transcript was provided to students to analyse for the purpose of a second-year research report.

Data Analysis

Indicate the type of analysis that has been conducted. Explain/describe the stages of the analysis (in enough detail so that it makes sense).

Thematic analysis was chosen as the method to analyse the focus group conducted for this study to identify patterns/themes within the data. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework was followed to analyse the data. First, the transcript was read through multiple times to ensure familiarity with the data. Next, comments and initial codes were noted in the margin to reduce large excerpts of data to smaller, meaningful codes, followed by an attempt to search for patterns from the codes and notes developed to develop themes. Single statements were reviewed regarding their relevance, to critically review if it was only one person's opinion or an opinion in general among/across the participants. The fourth stage involved reviewing and modifying the preliminary themes and memoing/cutting and pasting of data to support the themes being developed. At this stage, data that was proposed to relate to each of the themes was considered to decide whether the data really did support that theme. The fifth and final phase related to analysis involved defining themes and constructing a final list of themes and associated sub-themes.

Results

Always start your results section by reiterating what the aim of the research was and what analysis has been conducted. With qualitative analysis, you should then briefly state how many themes have been interpreted within the data. Once you have done this, you should provide a table that shows the themes, sub-themes (if present) and some supporting quotes (also remember to label this appropriately in APA style).

Deal with each theme in turn. For example...

Theme 1: xxxxxx

General description of the theme and justification for development as a theme. Mention sub-themes.

Sub-theme 1: xxxx

Introduce sub-theme, provide quotes and your interpretations.

Sub-theme 2: xxxx

Introduce sub-theme, provide quotes and your interpretations.

Brief summary to end 'theme'.

Theme 2: xxxxx

General description of the theme and justification for development as a theme. Mention sub-themes.

Sub-theme 1: xxxx

Introduce sub-theme, provide quotes and your interpretations.

Sub-theme 2: xxxx

Introduce sub-theme, provide quotes and your interpretations.

Brief summary to end 'theme'.

Continue for as many themes as you have to interpret. At the very end of the results section, aim to provide an overall summary of the themes.

Do not forget to include identifiers alongside your quotes! These can be page numbers and line numbers, or just line numbers (e.g., Janet, page 6, lines 84-85 – or Janet, lines 84-85). Also, format quotes accurately:

- Less than 40 words – “quotation marks” and placed within the sentence you are writing.
- More than 40 words – set as an extract below sentence, indented ½ inch to the left, no quotation marks.

Your fully annotated transcript must be included within the appendices to demonstrate your engagement with the analysis.

Discussion

Reiterate purpose of the study and the main findings (*conducting thematic analysis on the focus group transcript lead to the identification of X themes; xx, yy, zz, etc*). How do these findings relate to previous research findings (the literature/references you have included in your introduction to this report?) Why do you think the findings were as they were? Did anything develop that was unexpected? What other factors could be discussed in relation to this topic? Are there any areas that could be expanded upon for future research? Discuss, critique, and support your claims with literature to make this section stronger.

References

Start your references on a new page. Ensure they are in APA 7th style, in alphabetical order, and include a hanging indent.

Appendices

(label A – X in whatever order you refer to them within your report)

Consent form

Debrief form

Interview schedule

Table of themes

Fully annotated focus group transcript